

**Verbatim Transcript of Audio Recorded Proceedings**

June 14, 2011

**Joint Tacoma City Council / Tacoma Planning Commission Study Session**



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scheduling@byersanderson.com  
www.byersanderson.com

One Union Square: 600 University Street, Suite 2300 Seattle, WA 98101-4128  
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Old Town District: 2208 North 30th Street, Suite 202 Tacoma, WA 98403-3360  
Tacoma: **253 627-6401** Fax: **253 383-4884**

**EXHIBIT** C

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EXCERPT OF

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STUDY SESSION

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One Union Square	2208 North 30th Street, Suite 202
600 University St.	Tacoma, WA 98403
Suite 2300	(253) 627-6401
Seattle, WA 98101	(253) 383-4884 Fax
(206) 340-1316	scheduling@byersanderson.com
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1 MAYOR STRICKLAND: I would like to  
2 call to order the joint City Council Tacoma Planning  
3 Commission study session for June 14th, 2011, and then  
4 we're going to have our regular City Council study  
5 session, followed by a closed session and executive  
6 session. So we have a very, very long day here in Room  
7 16 planned.

8 So we're going to start with the billboard sign code  
9 amendments. At today's joint study session Tacoma  
10 Planning Commission members and staff will provide an  
11 overview of the Planning Commission's recommendations  
12 related to the billboard code amendments, digital  
13 billboards and the moratorium.

14 And before I call on our long range planning  
15 manager, Donna Stenger, I'm going to do a bit of a  
16 preamble here. I have some written comments, and I think  
17 what I want to do is try and give this whole conversation  
18 some context.

19 So for those of you who don't know, the discussion  
20 about billboards in Tacoma started 28 years ago. So when  
21 I was a junior in college we were talking about  
22 billboards in Tacoma. From 1983 through 1988 a variety  
23 of measures were enacted to control billboards in Tacoma.  
24 In 1983, for example, there was a moratorium on  
25 billboards on South Tacoma Way between 52nd and 56th

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1 Street. There were citywide regulations adopted in 1988  
2 where there was a cap put on the total number of  
3 billboards allowed in the city, and then in 1997 there  
4 was a relocation ratio of one-to-one, where we would  
5 remove one nonconforming billboard and rebuild it in a  
6 conforming area. An amortization of nonconforming  
7 billboards was introduced.

8 In 2007 Clear Channel sued the City of Tacoma, and  
9 since 1997 -- 13 years -- not a single billboard was  
10 removed. So in 2010 we entered into a settlement  
11 agreement with Clear Channel totally to try to gain the  
12 removal of what we desired in the least expensive way  
13 possible.

14 And I think one of the things that's been lost in  
15 the discussion about this issue is that we had to make  
16 some choices here. This litigation is very costly, it  
17 can drag on for a really long time, and we can still have  
18 no change whatsoever in the number of billboards.

19 So what we have, really, as far as billboards go in  
20 Tacoma is an amalgamation of various amendments, with  
21 codifications and additions over time, instead of one  
22 single, unified action by the City Council. We have a  
23 patchwork quilt of regulations, and just as many  
24 billboards up today as we did in 1997.

25 One of the things that's really changed since 1997

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1 is digital technology, and that really changes the  
2 conversation about what's possible and our definition of  
3 blight.

4 We gave the Planning Commission a very, very tough  
5 assignment. We asked you to develop code language which  
6 implemented the terms of our settlement agreement, as  
7 well as developing performance standards for billboards,  
8 and then we asked you to take that code out for public  
9 review and for input.

10 We also recently passed a moratorium on billboards,  
11 and this was forwarded to the commission for their review  
12 and recommendation.

13 So here's where we are today: We now have the  
14 planning commission's findings and recommendation  
15 regarding the proposed billboard code language, and their  
16 recommendation is pretty straightforward. They're here  
17 today to present their recommendation, and then we get to  
18 ask them questions. We will also have the opportunity to  
19 review the very thorough PowerPoint presentation in our  
20 agenda packet. And we thank you for that; it was very,  
21 very good information.

22 And I want to talk about where we're going because  
23 that's really where we need to spend our time. We  
24 understand and respect that some people don't like the  
25 settlement agreement, but we viewed it as a way to start

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1 the clock about how to get rid of the signs we didn't  
2 want and how best to get the number reduced, and we now  
3 understand a lot of these terms won't work. We've heard  
4 concerns about billboards in residential areas, about  
5 them in neighborhood commercial districts, near churches,  
6 near schools, and we agree that signage needs to be  
7 scaled appropriately.

8 We also heard that there are too many billboards.  
9 We also heard from members of the business community who  
10 say that billboards have a very express business need and  
11 help small businesses and large businesses communicate to  
12 their customers and get messages out. And.

13 We also heard from nonprofit organizations, ranging  
14 from social services to arts organizations, who rely on  
15 billboards as an effective advertising medium.

16 So here's what we're going to do: We're going to  
17 take out the code revisions without regard to settlement  
18 agreement terms. We're going to develop a code that  
19 works for the City of Tacoma, and now we hope that the  
20 new code can resolve the dispute and avoid more  
21 litigation, but Clear Channel is not going to dictate the  
22 terms of this.

23 So our task now is to develop a code that works for  
24 the City. This may resolve our dispute with Clear  
25 Channel, it may not, but we need to focus on what we want

2 (Pages 2 to 5)

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the code to accomplish for the City of Tacoma.  
So with that said, I'm going to turn this over to  
Donna Stenger. Donna.  
(Excerpt concluded.)

Cindy M. Koch, CCR, RPR, CRR, CLR  
Certified Court Reporter No. 2357.

Cindy M. Koch